

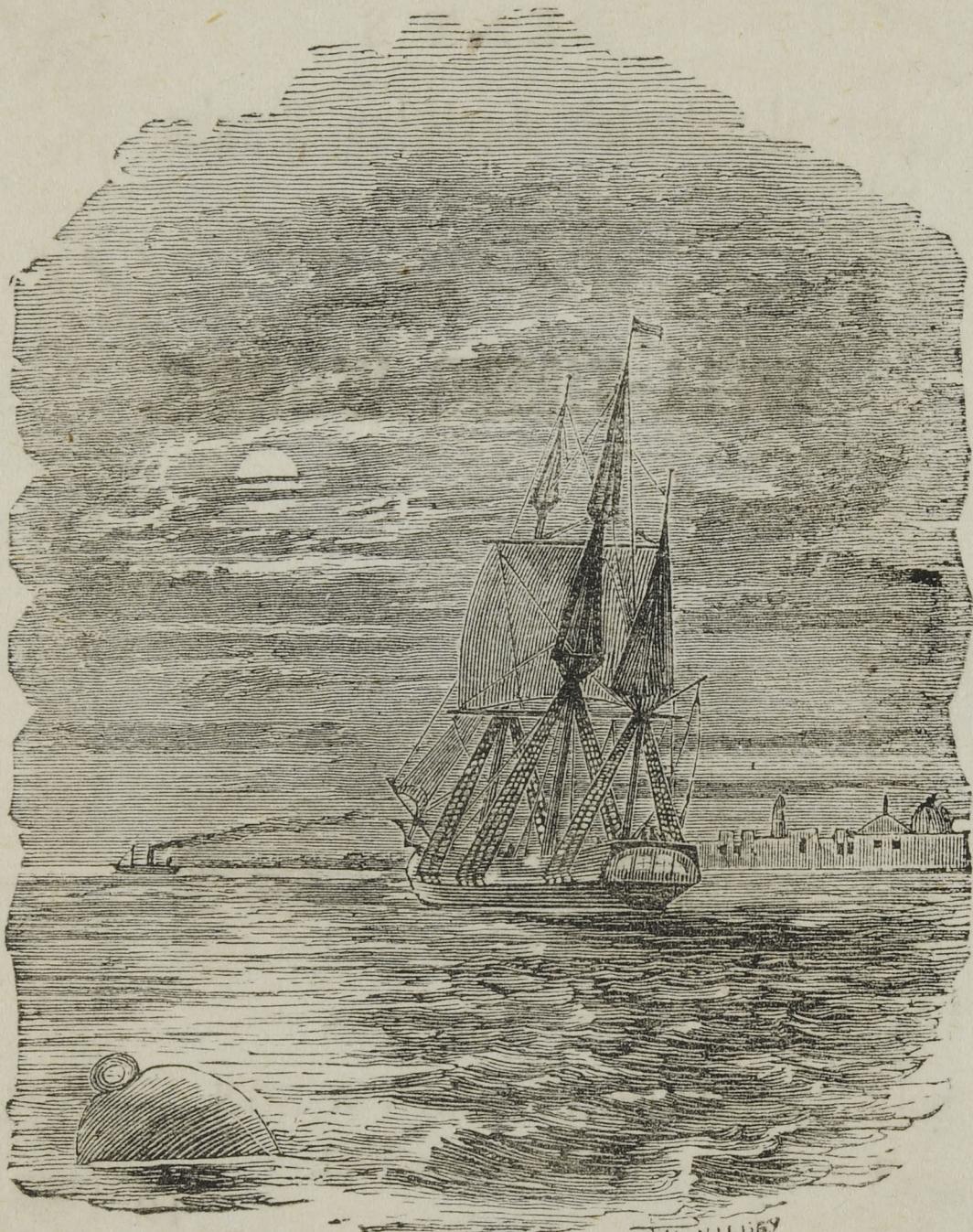
DEAN'S
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WELL-TIMED WORDS.



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WELL-TIMED WORDS.



W. N. LLEBY

A SEA-CAPTAIN, of a profligate character,
who commanded a vessel trading between

Liverpool and America, during the last war, once took on board a man as a common sailor, to serve during the voyage, just as he was leaving port. The new comer was soon found to be of a most quarrelsome, untractable disposition, a furious blasphemer, and, when an opportunity offered, a drunkard. Besides all these disqualifications, he was wholly ignorant of nautical affairs, or counterfeited ignorance to escape duty. In short, he was the bane and plague of the vessel, and refused obstinately to give any account of himself, or his family, or past life.

At length, a violent storm arose, all hands were piped upon deck, and all, as the captain thought, were too few to save the ship. When the men were mustered to their quarters, the sturdy blasphemer was missing, and my friend went below to seek for him ; great was his surprise at finding him on his knees, repeating the Lord's prayer with wonderful rapidity, over and over again, as if he had bound himself to countless reiterations. Vexed at what he deemed hypocrisy or cowar-

dice, he shook him roughly by the collar, exclaiming, “*Say your prayers in fair weather.*” The man rose up, observing, in a low voice, “God grant I may ever see fair weather to say them.”

In a few hours, the storm happily abated; a week more brought them to harbour, and an incident so trivial passed quickly away from the memory of the captain; the more easily, as the man in question was paid off the day after landing, and appeared not again.

Four years more had elapsed, during which, though the captain had twice been shipwrecked, and was grievously hurt by the falling of a spar, he pursued without amendment a life of profligacy and contempt of God. At the end of this period, he arrived in the port of New York, after a very tedious and dangerous voyage from England.

It was on a Sabbath morning, and the streets were thronged with persons proceeding to the several houses of worship with which that city abounds—but the captain was bent on far other occupation,

designing to drown the recollection of perils and deliverances in a celebrated tavern which he had too long and too often frequented.

As he walked leisurely towards this goal, he encountered a very dear friend, a quondam associate of many a thoughtless



hour. Salutations over, the captain seized his arm, declaring that he should accompany him to the hotel. "I will do so,"

replied the other, with great calmness, "on condition that you come with me first for a single hour into this house (a church), and thank God for His mercies to you on the deep." The captain was ashamed to refuse, so the two friends entered the temple together. Already were all the seats occupied, and a dense crowd filled the aisle; and, by dint of personal exertion, they succeeded in reaching a position right in front of the pulpit, at about five yards distance. The preacher, one of the most popular of the day, riveted the attention of the entire congregation, including the captain, whom his features and voice, though he could not assign any time or place of previous meeting, seemed not wholly unknown, particularly when he spoke with animation. At length, the preacher's eye fell upon the spot where the two friends stood. He suddenly paused—still gazing upon the captain, as if to make himself sure that he laboured under no optical delusion—and, after a silence of more than a minute, pronounced with a voice that

shook the building, “*Say your prayers in fair weather.*”

The audience were lost in amazement, nor was it until a considerable time had elapsed, that the preacher recovered sufficient self-possession to recount the incident with which the reader is already acquainted, adding, with deep emotion, that the words which his captain uttered in the storm, had clung to him by day and by night after his landing, as if an angel had been charged with the duty of repeating them in his ears—that he felt the holy call as coming direct from above, to do the work of his crucified Master—that he had studied at college for the ministry, and was now, through grace, such as they saw and heard.

At the conclusion of this affecting address, he called on the audience to join in prayer with himself, that the same words might be blessed in turn to him who had first used them. But God had outrun their petitions—the captain was already His child, before his former shipmate had ceased to tell his story. The power of the

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Spirit had wrought effectually upon him, and subdued every lofty imagination. And so, when the people dispersed, he exchanged the hotel for the house of the preacher, with whom he tarried six weeks, and parted with him to pursue his profession, with a heart devoted to the service of the Saviour, and with holy and happy assurances, which advancing years hallowed and strengthened, and sanctified.

